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JOHN WOON; A HERO WHO MIGHT HAVE BEEN FORGOTTEN

by Frederick Feather

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John Woon

A hero who might have been forgotten

By FREDERICK FEATHER

"The attempt to discover a water communication through the Arctic regions between the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans is one which has engaged the attention of maritime nations, and especially that of Great Britain, for a period extending over nearly three centuries. It has fallen to the lot of Captain McClure, his Officers and crew, to set at rest this question. They are undoubtedly the first who have passed by water from sea to sea and have returned to this country a living evidence of the existence of a North West Passage."

(Parliamentary Blue Book — Report from Committees, Arctic Exploration, 1855.)

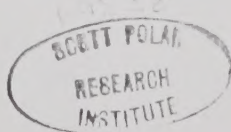


A corporal of Royal Marines — uniform worn from 1844 until the Crimean War. (Picture by courtesy of Royal Marines Museum, Southsea).

The stories best remembered are those heard at mother's knee. When my mother was in a reminiscent mood, she would tell me tales of her family: fantastic tales that I took in without question when I was small but as I became older and more cynical I would ask for more detail (which she could not always supply.) The one I liked best was about "Sergeant Woon who", she told me, "was in charge of all the Marines at the discovery of the North West Passage." She did not specify her relationship to the long dead Sergeant, but there was one, for Woon was her third Christian name, which she did not care to use. My historical knowledge was sparse; somehow in my mind I associated him with a picture of Henry Hudson in a boat in Hudson Bay and I often mentioned him as an ancestor of Tudor or Jacobean times. For twenty years I studied history without giving him another thought. My mother never mentioned him again and then, suddenly, it was too late.

My historical research brought me an invitation to visit Canada in 1975. I found it very beautiful, though a little short on libraries and museums for my taste, but my wife was very smitten. On our return she started to read every book she could find on the subject of North Canada exploration, though we were thousands of miles west of Hudson Bay we had seen the really wild Canada of Alberta and British Columbia and could form an idea of what it would be like during the winter. Among the books she chose was "The Search for Franklin" by Professor Leslie Neatby, the story of the men who tried to find a lost explorer, Sir John Franklin. He disappeared whilst trying to find the ephemeral "North West Passage" a little over a century ago. This book was particularly to Heather's taste and she was devouring it one evening when suddenly she gave a little squeal. She handed me the book open at Page 189, where I read, "Hunting was resumed towards the end of January (1852), but with caution, as the period of light was short. On one occasion the Negro Anderson parted from his comrades in pursuit of deer and lost his way in darkness and fog. Sergeant Woon of the Royal Marines found him lying exhausted on the snow and persuaded him to get up . . ." So, he had existed!

It was a piece of luck that the Professor came from the town of Saskatoon, the very same in which my Canadian host lived, and I wrote off to him dropping as many names as I could. The reply came by return of post. Mr. Neatby wrote, "I have an admiration for him which only those can share who have experienced how extreme



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cold saps the will-power and induces indifference and inertia." However, he could not tell me a lot more about him other than "he was the smallest man on the expedition and Anderson the largest" and suggested I might write to the Scott Polar Institute at Cambridge. That august body could only add that the Sergeant's Christian name was John. By this time Heather's curiosity was really roused and when the local council offered a course in 'Family History' she could not wait to join. Now, just six months later, after the most frantic researches, much of the story of John Woon can be told. I present it in my mother's memory — it would have thrilled her so much.

Early in the Autumn of 1817 William Woon married Mary Ann Coleman in the Church of Saint Petroc at Bodmin in the county of Cornwall. The bridegroom was aged between sixteen and nineteen and was described as a "sojourner" in that Parish, from which it is deduced that he was not a resident of Bodmin and may have in fact been encamped on the nearby moor with the Regiment of Royal Cornwall Light Infantry. Despite its grand title this was not a glamorous unit, it was in fact the lowly "militia". Not many years previously the militia would have been dressed in their peasant smocks and armed with pitchforks, but the need to send the regular Regiments to fight Napoleon had also meant that the Militia was armed and uniformed as Britain's defence. The Cornishmen were of the 31st Militia Regiment with the scarlet jackets and navy blue facings of the 'Royal' units.

Woon's rank is not known, but it is likely he was a private and this would have made his marriage unusual as often only the officers and senior rankers could obtain the necessary permission. The ranks had camp-followers or common-law wives.

By 5 June 1820 the union was blessed with a son, William Coleman Woon — it was the practice in those days for the second Christian name of the first born to reflect the surname of the mother — and by 2 March 1823 by a daughter, Mary Ann. The dates are those of baptism as the Parish Records do not show birthdays. By the time his daughter was baptised, William senior was a bugler. If the Cornish Militia were in line with the rest of the Army, he would have worn a smart new uniform with reversed colours, as bandsmen wore the same as the remainder, except that the jackets were navy blue and the facings red.

The parish of Saint Petroc records the baptism of 18 December 1825 of John, the son of William Woon, now a corporal of the Regiment. The last entry in that source is another baptism, that of Elinora Violetta on 28 December 1828, daughter of William Woon, a cordwainer (shoemaker) of the Militia. It is certain that the early years of John Woon's life were spent in the camp and he may have grown up enthralled with the varied uniforms. The period between Waterloo and the Crimean War was probably the most peaceful in the history of these islands and the extravagance of the uniforms of the small army (of the richest nation in the world) had to be seen to be appreciated. But peace meant a run-down in establishments and the Militia Regiments suffered the earliest cuts. The family were lost to sight, to reappear in Cannon Street, Devonport, where the census of 1841 listed the occupants of one house as William and Mary Woon (aged 40 — it was the habit to round adults down

to the nearest five years), John aged 15, Ellen aged 13, Edwin aged 11, Jane aged 8, Emily aged 6, Thomas aged 3 and Henry aged 1. Whether William Coleman and Mary Ann had left home by this time is not known — he would have been about 21.

On 28 June 1844 John Woon, a labourer born in Bodmin, giving his age as 19 years 9 months was attested, then enrolled in 16th Company of the Woolwich Division, Royal Marines. The Regiment had a Division in his home town of Plymouth, so what he was doing in London is puzzling, it may be that he was engaged in the breaking up of a ship which had come from Devonport on its last journey. Soldiering was obviously to his taste, for within two years he was promoted Corporal in 12 Company, then in April 1848 he was posted to his first ship, the troopship, "H.M.S. Resistance". This craft was an obsolete 38 gun frigate which had seen service against Napoleon and had been afloat in Nelson's day. She was finishing off her days ferrying troops, the Royal Marines acting as military police for the voyage which was to last only a matter of weeks. By the end of June he was back in Woolwich and promoted Sergeant in 16th Company on 31 August 1848. Surely a sign of merit (in peacetime) to reach such a rank with only four years service.

At Woolwich he would have been able to see the masts of "H.M.S. Investigator", a ship which was being specially fitted and strengthened for Arctic exploration, having been purchased for the Navy in 1848. The command was given to Commander Robert McClure R.N. and the Royal Marines establishment was six privates, a corporal and John Woon. Lady Franklin, anxious to find her husband, Sir John who had not been heard of since his ships, "H.M.S. Erebus" and "H.M.S. Terror" froze in the ice north of Canada in 1846, was the human dynamo behind the many expeditions that were to carry out the search. This was the Royal Navy's effort: "H.M.S. Investigator" was fitted with the most advanced heating system and strengthened to the limit that Victorian ingenuity could provide. The contractors loaded it with poor quality flour and salted meat of doubtful nutritional value and the expedition sailed at Christmas 1849. Records show that John Woon drew £12.0.6d as two months advance wages. The whole crew was in fact on double wages for the duration. Woon spent £1.16.8½d on his seaman's "slop chest" and he also brought half-a-crown's worth of soap and six shilling's worth of tobacco before he left. Any other purchases would have had to be made from the ship's stores.

It will be remembered that the Army and Navy of this time were still disciplined with the "cat-o-nine tails", though happily its use was becoming rare and by the end of Woon's service it had been abolished. The ship was reasonably settled, though the Captain did at one stage place Lieutenant Haswell under arrest. It may be that Woon, as commander of the Marines, was his jailer.

Based on an appreciation of the position where Sir John Franklin had last been seen, McClure was ordered to try to find the North West Passage from the Pacific coast of Canada, so the voyage was by way of the Falkland Islands, Cape Horn and Hawaii, where the crew were allowed to spend a few days. At the end of the year's voyage they were at Princess Royal Islands, where they wintered and acclimatised to the cold. Then on through the spring and summer they rounded Banks Island until,



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after a whole year circumnavigating that island, they froze between icy walls. Much of the meat had to be disposed of as it progressively rotted in its casks. Though at that stage the crew could not foresee the eventuality, "H.M.S. Investigator" was to sail no further. Its occupants were to be frozen in for nearly three years. They were also to learn later that the crews of "H.M.S. Erebus" and "H.M.S. Terror" had abandoned their ships after Franklin died in 1847 and had tried to reach safety overland. All had perished. So "H.M.S. Investigator" was shut in among the ice floes of the ineptly named "Bay of Mercy".

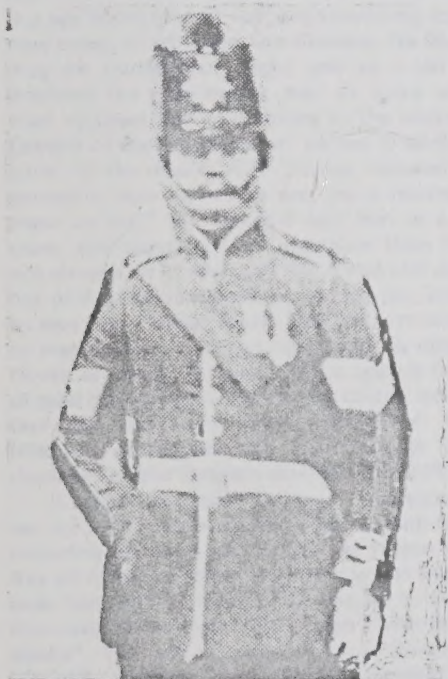
It was at this time that John Woon began to develop a taste for hunting. The game was rather larger than any he could have seen as a child on Bodmin Moor. The Captain described an early encounter . . . "We were not destined, however, to be long without fresh meat. On the 8th the Sergeant of Marines left the ship about noon, and some hours later, when returning, he observed two Musk Oxen lying down — one of them asleep. He was able to advance within 120 yards, when he fired and wounded the larger; both had at this time got on their legs. On the receipt of the first wound, which did not appear to effect him in the least, the animal approached with a most ferocious aspect until distant about forty yards, when he stood as if about to make a charge; his assailant again fired, and again wounded him, but he still remained in the same attitude. The other had by this time approached more closely, and with the view of securing both by disabling the second, he fired and wounded him; the animal became enraged, and although less formidable looking than the other, advanced more courageously. The Sergeant, in the meantime,

reloaded and fired his fifth and last ball at his first antagonist who still remained in the same position — the missile struck him in the centre of the forehead, passed through his brain and he fell to the ground. His ball cartridge having been then expended, he quickly reloaded and fired the screw of his ramrod at the second animal, which had approached more closely, and wounded him in the neck, when he fiercely advanced to a distance of only a few feet. Thinking he was about to make a final rush, as a last resource, he fired his ramrod, which entered at the left foreshoulder, passed diagonally through his body and out at his right flank, inflicting a fatal, raking wound; and he fell lifeless at his feet. Thus by his own efforts he had accomplished the greatest sporting feat, and one attended with the greatest amount of good that had yet fallen to the lot of any individual amongst us."

The ship's Doctor Alexander Armstrong was delighted on other than sporting grounds. His thoughts were of the crew's welfare . . . "The larger of the two oxen was even in death one of the most formidable looking animals I have ever seen. He measured seven and a half feet in length, six and a half in circumference, and was 767 pounds in weight — viz. meat 374 pounds, head and skin 140 lbs., other parts 253 lbs.; the stomach was one of the most capacious receptacles for food that had come under my observation, and measured thirty-nine inches by twenty-seven inches. The other animal was younger and smaller, and a male likewise; it weighed 565 pounds, and afforded us 273 pounds of meat. Both were in excellent condition, and the sight of such beef was quite a novelty — we feasted our eyes on it for the remainder of the evening."

McClure himself added his eulogy to that of the others . . . "I cannot mention the name of Sergeant Woon without here recording the high opinion entertained of him by the Captain, officers and crew. He proved himself invaluable, was always a ready volunteer for any service, most correct and soldier-like in his conduct, ever promoted what contributed to the hilarity and cheerfulness of the crew and was one of our most indefatigable and successful hunters. In short, he was brave and intrepid on every occasion which fully tested the man and he proved himself a credit to his corps."

The intrepid Sergeant was soon to be put to a greater test, which the Captain saw fit to describe in great detail . . . "One person especially distinguished himself not only as a sportsman, but in the execution of any service requiring unflagging energy and marked intelligence; and this was the non-commissioned officer of Royal Marines, Sergeant Woon. He did good service everywhere; but no better instance of the metal such as he are made of can be given than one which occurred on the 4th of January. A coloured man, serving in the ship, whilst out sporting, wounded a deer, and, after following it a while, discovered he had lost his way, just as a fog came on. The temperature was very low, the man was tired; and the peril of his position caused him to lose his presence of mind and to wander about." The wanderer himself was a valued member of the crew, worthy of the Captain's attention. "Charles Anderson was a very good, well-conducted man, and from his many amusing qualities, a great favourite in the ship. He was a man of colour, represented himself as a Canadian, inured to a hunter's life in North America and was one of the most



*Colour Sergeant of Royal Marine Light Infantry 1860.
Possibly John Woon.
(Courtesy of Royal Marine Museum, Southsea)*

powerful and muscular men amongst our crew." McClure went on . . . "By great good fortune Sergeant Woon, who was likewise out in quest of game, saw him and joined him; but the Sergeant found the poor creature so beside himself with excitement and horror, that every endeavour to soothe him, by promising to take him safely on board the ship, failed. Fits came on, which, when they passed off, left the man quite prostrated in strength. By entreaty and remonstrance, the Sergeant induced him at last to walk a little; but at 2 p.m., when the short day of that period was fast closing in, the unfortunate man's energies entirely failed, and he sank upon the ground, bleeding at mouth and nose, and writhing in convulsions. The Sergeant saw now that all hope of the man saving himself was at an end; and to leave him where he was, many miles from the ship, was to leave him to certain death: he would have been devoured by the wolves even before the process of freezing to death would have released him from his misery. There was no alternative but to drag him to the ship — no easy matter, when the Sergeant dared not part with his gun, and the man was one of the heaviest of a fine ship's company. Sergeant Woon then, with heroic resolution set to his task. Slings both muskets over his shoulder, he took the man's arms round his own neck, and commenced dragging his half-dead ship-mate towards the "Investigator". The labour was, as may be supposed, excessive; and the only relief the Sergeant had was whenever he had dragged the body up one side of a hill, or when he came to a ravine, to lay him down, and roll him to the bottom; rather severe treatment for an invalid but it had the merit of arousing the man somewhat from his lethargy. By eleven o'clock at night the gallant marine had thus conveyed his burden to within a mile of the ship; but ten hours of such toil, amid darkness, cold and snow, now began to tell upon him likewise. He found he could drag his burden no longer; and as a last resource he implored the unfortunate man to make an effort, and tried to cheer him by pointing to the rockets which the Captain of the "Investigator" caused to be thrown up as a guide to the missing men. Seeing, however, that all his entreaties were replied to only by a request "to be left alone to die," the Sergeant laid him in a bed of deep snow, and started off for assistance from the ship. This was already on its way; and Woon met and conducted two out of three parties to where the man lay, and just in time to save him. He was found with his arms raised, and rigid in that position, his eyes open, and his mouth so firmly frozen as to require much force to open it for the purpose of pouring restoratives down his throat, whilst his hands, feet and face were much frost-bitten. His life was, however, saved; and for that courage and devotion displayed by the Sergeant deserved all credit."

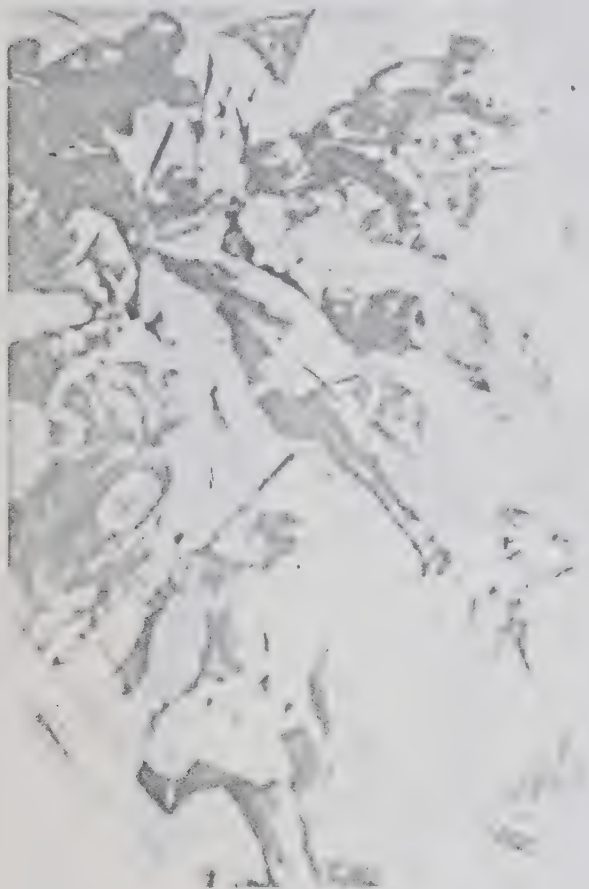
It became necessary to leave "Investigator" locked in her icy tomb and the ship's company took to their sledges intending to move east across the frozen waters of the Bay of Mercy. It might have been whilst they were taking their last look at the "colours nailed to the mast," that there arrived amongst them a man "with face as black as ebony". This was Lieutenant Pym of another expedition ("H.M.S. Resolute" and "H.M.S. Intrepid") which had passed round the north of Canada from the east! The North West Passage was established, Pym, whose colour was the result of exposure rather than pigment, led them back to succour. They were re-embarked on "H.M.S.

North Star" and arrived off Ramsgate on 6 October 1854. My Lords of the Admiralty had first to have their pound of flesh and they were court martialled at Sheerness for "losing the Navy its ship": triumphantly cleared of all blame they were feted, promoted and rewarded. McClure became a full Captain, John Woon a Colour Sergeant of 32nd Company and both received the coveted Arctic Medal. It is interesting to note that the timbers of "H.M.S. Investigator" were later recovered and used to make a desk now used by the President of the United States of America.

The returning hero took the opportunity to settle down with one Sarah Frances Blaxell: the most diligent researches at Saint Catherine's House have failed to trace a Marriage Certificate, whilst the records show that on 24 February 1856 a son was born to this union. He was given the name of John Blaxell Woon, whilst his parents were living at 7 Bloomfield Place, Plumstead. The Crimean War was in full swing and Sergeant Prettyjohn was in course of winning the Royal Marines its first Victoria Cross. The Regiment had been split into two separate entities, the "red Marines" or Royal Marine Light Infantry and the "blue Marines" or Royal Marine Artillery. The Corps was to remain in two parts until 1923. John Woon served with the former. By the time of the birth of his daughter, Frances Sarah, in the winter of 1857, he was already at sea on his first campaign.

The British Army, depleted by the rigours of the Crimea and the horrors of the Indian Mutiny, had other troubles. A force was required to teach the Chinese a lesson. Private John Moyse, the "drunken private of the Buffs" was about to lose his head for refusing to kow-tow at the Emperor's feet and so another colonial war began. The R.M.L.I. furnished two battalions: the first from Woolwich and Chatham, the second from Portsmouth and Plymouth and Woon was given the post of acting Sergeant-Major of the former. He would not have appeared to be a pre-possessing figure as his descriptive form shows him as having been 5 feet 7 inches with brown hair, hazel eyes and fresh complexion. With the Indian Mutiny in full swing troopships were so short that the Navy was obliged to hire two from the Brazilian Steamship Company, "S.S. Imperator" and "S.S. Imperatrice". Woon and his Battalion were in the latter, whilst with the Second Battalion in the former was a Lieutenant, later to become Major Poyntz, the second Chief Constable of Essex. Poyntz described a pleasant voyage by way of Cape-Town, Singapore and Hong Kong, in the course of which the Marines were transferred to the China Fleet. Woon was allocated to "H.M.S. Calcutta", an obsolete 82 gun sail-driven battleship, which had been rotting in Bombay Dockyard. On 25 June 1859 four hundred Royal Marine Light Infantrymen under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Lemon attacked the formidable Taku Forts, guarding the mouth of the river which lead to Peking. There was a short softening-up bombardment by British gunboats, then the Marines were led across a wide mudflat covered with sharpened stakes. As they advanced, the cannons of the Pei-Ho Fortress opened up at point blank range and of the four hundred less than one hundred and fifty reached the first obstacle. Of these only enough reached the walls of the Fort to erect one scaling ladder, which was immediately thrown down. There was nothing left but to retreat. Woon's

conduct at this time earned him a mention in despatches (History of the Royal Navy by Clowes, Volume 7.) This action was considered a defeat and no medals were issued, which caused a lively correspondence in the "Army and Navy Gazette" for 1859. One writer suggested that "Sergeant-Major Wood" (a misprint — there was not one) deserved a Victoria Cross. The remnants were returned to England to recover. There Woon was confirmed in his rank and awarded a Meritorious Service Medal, highly desirable as it carried with it an annuity of £10.



Storming of the Taku Forts, 1859 — The Scaling Ladder.

At the age of 35 and with only sixteen years service Woon had reached the top of his profession. His wages and annuity were enough to make life comfortable and he could afford a larger family. Florence Roseland was born in 1863, William in 1865 and Frank Maxwell in 1866 — then Queen Victoria took a hand. Impressed with the performance of enlisted men in the Crimean and Chinese Wars and the Indian Mutiny, she decreed that a proportion of officers would in future be drawn from the ranks and Woon was one of the earliest chosen. In 1867 he was promoted Quartermaster-Lieutenant and posted to Chatham. From a comfortable, settled life as Sergeant-Major he was faced with all the expenses of mess life, with colleagues who mostly enjoyed private incomes. His annuity passed to another ranker (Sergeant Thomas Smithson) and he had to be content with the

dark-blue-ribboned Meritorious Service Medal itself. Soon after his arrival at Chatham his wife produced Albert Allen. The only contact with his family was with his sister, Jane, who had moved to London after her marriage to William Hoskin at Devonport in 1853. The marriage certificate describes her father as "William Woon, foreman of labourers in H.M. Gunwharf." The only references to Quartermaster Woon in the letter book for Chatham Barracks are requests for married accommodation and for gas to be fitted in his quarters. As an officer he was maintaining a lower profile than his ebullient conduct as a ranker. In 1869 Woolwich Division was suppressed and a new recruit depot opened up at Deal. Woon was given command of the Stores with a "half-crown a day stores allowance." With the order for his posting came a request for expenses for the removal. The Adjutant-General replied that "due to the peculiar circumstances of the case" Woon and his family were to be given rail warrants and were permitted to send "up to one ton of effects by freight car."

At Deal the family settled into a quiet pattern. 1871 saw the arrival of another son, Ernest Walter. Then in 1873 his eldest son, John, was commissioned Lieutenant in the Royal Marine Artillery, the start of a spectacular career. In 1874 another daughter, Martha Grace, was born and early in 1877 another son, Rupert Stewart. On 8 March 1877 the English weather achieved what the Arctic cold could not and John Woon died as a serving officer.



*Private Royal Marine Light Infantry 1865.
(Courtesy of Royal Marines Museum Southsea.)*

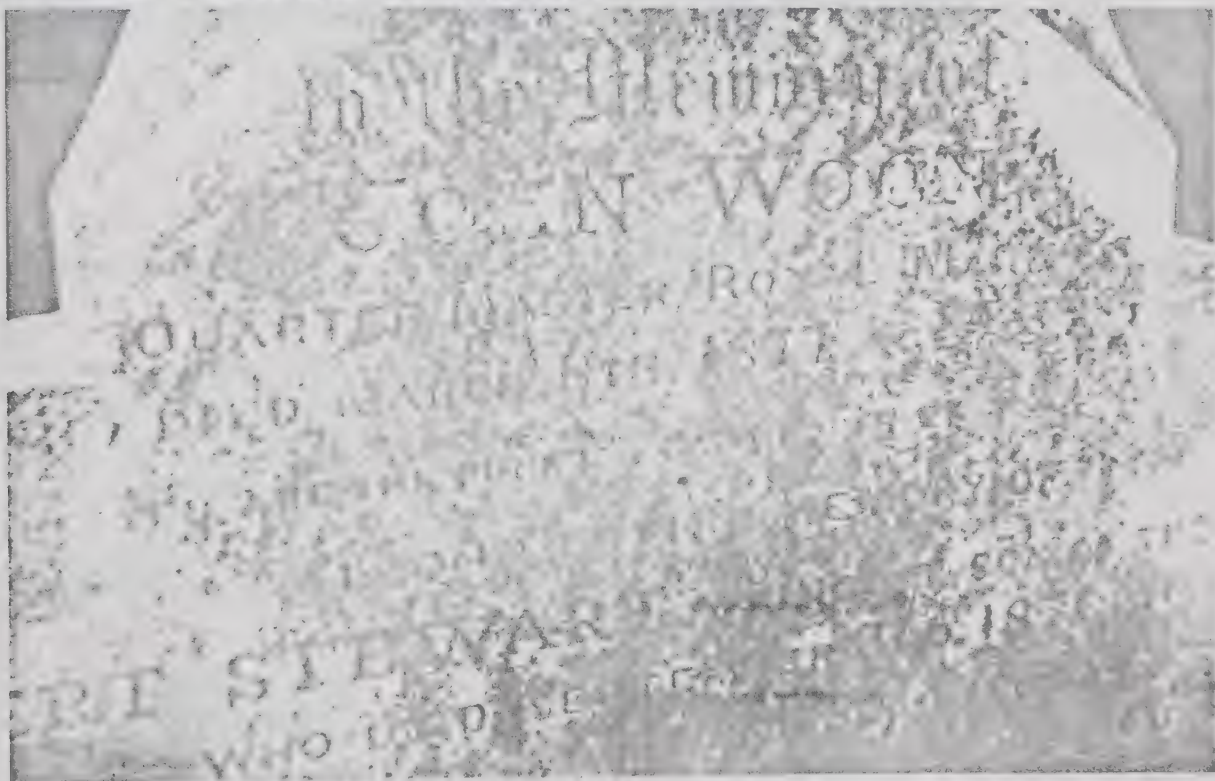


The Deal correspondence discloses a letter with details of his service, presumably for a pension for his widow, but there is no trace of such a grant. The Pension Office also regretted that they could not help with his funeral expenses of £9.6.6d. and requested an investigation as to how much his exposure to weather during the parade of 27 February contributed to his death. The only other mention of his wife, Sarah, is two years later, when living at 32a High Street, Deal, she registered the death of her baby son, Rupert. Lieutenant Woon left the Marines in that year, transferring to the Indian Staff Corps.

In 1882 Sarah Woon died. She was buried with her husband in the Barrack Churchyard and her name was added to the cross above the family grave. Some years later the area became a "Garden of Rest" and the cross was moved to the barrack wall, against which it stands today. The orphans scattered: perhaps some ended up with the sixteen children of his sister, Jane, my great grandmother — as until the Second World War my branch of the family had held some records of his voyage to the Arctic. These were destroyed by bombing in 1940, having been borrowed and autographed by the explorer, Shackleton.

The Cross from the grave of John, Sarah and Rupert Woon in The Garden of Rest, Deal Barracks.

The Inscription.





A group of Royal Marine Artillery Officers, Eastney Barracks, C. 1875. The future Sir John Blaxwell Woon is standing at right of the rear row.

(Courtesy of Royal Marines Museum, Southsea.)

I finally present all that I have been able to discover of his descendants

JOHN BLAXWELL WOON

Born 1856, commissioned 1873. Served on the Channel Fleet, then transferred to the Indian Staff in time for the Second Afghan War, serving at Kandahar. He rose to the command of the 30th Punjabis in the Khyber Pass. Then in 1901 took his regiment to Pekin during the famous "55 days". He became a Brigadier, Major General and then Lieutenant-General Sir John Blaxwell Woon in 1911, a Knight Commander of the Bath. In 1917 he became a full General and retired to Weybridge in Surrey, where he died in 1938. I know of a lady who once served him as a shop assistant.

WILLIAM (H.V.?) WOON

Born 1865. Served in the Bechuanaland and Matabele Wars. In 1902 he was a Lieutenant in Steinaecker's Horse, a South African Mounted Infantry Regiment. He was severely wounded and left the service.

FRANK MAXWELL WOON

Born 1866. He died "whilst proceeding on active service".

ALBERT ALLEN WOON

Born 1868. He died 'from wounds after active service'.

ERNEST WALKER WOON

Born 1871. In 1916 he was a Major, second-in-command of the 5th South African Infantry Regiment in German East Africa. He was severely wounded and his Distinguished Service Order was recorded in the London Gazette in 1917.

Of John Woon's daughters nothing is known. His sister, Jane, had sixteen children and the youngest was John Woon Hoskin, my maternal grandfather.

I would especially like to thank Miss Spiers and the Staff of the Royal Marines Museum at Eastney Barracks, Southsea for their assistance and to invite readers to visit the Museum, which is one of the most sumptuously housed I have seen.

The postscript to the story of John Woon is provided by Surgeon Armstrong of "H.M.S. Investigator", speaking about Charles Anderson... "He was, however, extensively frost-bitten, which ultimately entailed the loss by amputation of both great toes, with portions of others, and also of the fingers, together with a part of the nose. He was ever afterwards highly susceptible of cold, and

remained much debilitated, and became subsequently affected with scurvy.

This incident furnished a striking proof of the differences in the moral and physical powers of endurance; for notwithstanding his arduous exertions, Sergeant Woon returned on board apparently as fresh as if he had had only an ordinary walk."

An extract from the death certificate of John Woon.

CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF DEATH

Given at the GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE, LONDON.



Application Number 96096

REGISTRATION DISTRICT <i>Barley</i>								
1877 DEATH in the Sub-district of <i>Heal</i> in the <i>Parish of Kent</i>								
No.	When and where died	Name and surname	Sex	Age	Occupation	Cause of death	Signature, description, and residence of informant	When registered
8.	<i>1877</i> <i>March</i> <i>North</i> <i>Barracks</i> <i>Walton</i>	<i>John</i> <i>Woon</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>51</i> <i>years</i>	<i>Quartermaster</i> <i>Royal</i> <i>Marines</i>	<i>Acute</i> <i>Rheumatism</i> <i>5 days. 8. years.</i> <i>Gouty disease</i> <i>Exacerbated by</i> <i>William Ross.</i> <i>M.D.</i>	<i>John Blaxell</i> <i>Woon</i> <i>Son</i> <i>Eastney</i> <i>Barracks</i> <i>Potsmouth</i>	<i>North</i> <i>March</i> <i>1877</i>
		<i>Thos. E. Lovell</i> <i>Registrar</i>						

CERTIFIED to be a true copy of an entry in the certified copy of a Register of Deaths in the District above mentioned.
Given at the GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE, LONDON, under the Seal of the said Office, the 18th day of April 19 77.

This certificate is issued in pursuance of the Births and Deaths Registration Act 1953.
Section 34 provides that any certified copy of an entry purporting to be issued or stamped with the seal of the General Register Office shall be received as evidence of the birth or death in which it relates without any further or other proof of its authenticity, and no certified copy purporting to have been given in pursuance of the said Act shall be of any force or effect unless it is issued or stamped as aforesaid.
CAUTION.—Any person who (1) falsifies any of the particulars on this certificate, or (2) uses a falsified certificate as true, knowing it to be false, is liable to prosecution.



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John Woon : a hero who might have
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